

## Anti-Prayer Meeting Disciples.

That class of professing Christians who rarely or never enter a prayer-meeting may properly be designated by this name, if we are careful to except those who would but cannot attend such meetings—those who are absent in body but not in spirit—those whom distance of residence, or ill-health, or indispensable employment prevents. They constitute a class, having distinct characteristics, known and read of all men; and it is worth while to enquire what important service this numerous class of disciples render to the cause which they have by profession espoused.

It is plain, in the first place, that, as far as the force and the usefulness of the Church consists in the aggregate of its living and God-fearing piety, they contribute nothing to that force and usefulness; for they that fear the Lord as such as speak often one to another. To those who have a living, regenerate character, it is as natural as breath to seek those gratifications to spiritual appetites, and those aids to growth in grace, which are to be had in the prayer-meeting; and those who have no such appetites, have, to say the least, a type of piety that is far from being efficient.

Nor are they serviceable in increasing the aggregate amount of prayers ascending from a Church. The exerted strength of any Church is in proportion to the acceptable prayer which it lifts to heaven; so that every praying one added to the number brings an addition of strength. But when we have added one of the anti-prayer meeting disciples, we have added no strength, because his habits show that he does not love to pray. He that loves prayer, will love the place where prayer is wont to be made: and a whole regiment of men who avoid the prayer-meeting, would not add the weight of a feather to the aggregate power of intercession.

Nor can we rely on the aid of such efforts to revive religion. Justice, however, here requires it to be said, that this class of disciples are not unfrequently fond of protracted meetings, and whatever goes by the name of extra efforts; and during such efforts they are wont to suspend their aversion to prayer-meetings, and even for the time be extra zealous in them—as if they would do up their whole religious work in a month, and then have done with it. But to revive religion, by entering individually into a quickened and earnest devotedness to the cause of Christ, and conversion of men, they have no disposition. They have become estranged from the prayer-meeting because they have no heart to pray for revivals.

Nor is this class of disciples much given to labours and sacrifices in Christian instruction. The next time you enter the Sabbath-school, look around and see how many of the teachers belong to the class above named. There is a more intimate connexion between the Sabbath-school and prayer-meeting than many suppose.

Nor are they serviceable, in any way, of general fruitfulness of Christian life and example. They have many negative qualities becoming Christians—that is, they abstain from many scandalous sins. But they show a want of heart and active interest in all forms of positive Christian obedience.

And yet they must be of some service in some way. In a great house, there are both vessels to honour and to dishonour: and it is reasonable to expect that, in the great house of God, even such vessels will be made to subserve some good ends. And they actually do, in the first place, serve to show the difference between mere profession and real piety. And thus they become the means of correcting the mistake of those who would charge upon religion all the delinquencies of its professed friends. They make it clear to the public eye that they are not all Israel that are of Israel.

Their example also goes to another result—to show that living piety cannot be maintained in a state of voluntary isolation from the heart of the Church, and in neglect of the means of sustaining a living sympathy with the common life of the members of Christ.

They are also means of good in promoting the humility, and checking the self-sufficiency, of the Church. They do a work like to that done by the surplus men, whom Gideon separated from his little army—leaving the rest to know how small their really effective force is and how much depends on each one, and how the whole result must depend on God. Their absence from the prayer-meeting humbles and instructs, by letting us know how slender is the human arm, on which we would fain rely.

Furthermore, they are serviceable in culti-

vating our Christian charity, by giving us difficult cases on which to exercise it. We would fain believe every one to be a Christian who professes to be such, and in whom nothing appears plainly to contradict the profession: and this class of disciples furnish many specimens of that kind. And in order to exercise desired charity, we must be ingenuous and laborious to frame excuses for doubtful acts, and give a favourable construction to what may seem unchristian. And thus our charity is in a way to have her perfect work, and cover a multitude of sins.

These being the facts of the case, it is of no use to scold, tease, and upbraid this class of disciples. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. We never knew an evening lecture or prayer-meeting filled by such means. Nor is much really lost by the bodily absence of those whose hearts cannot be present; and there is also this consolation: When the prayer-meeting consists only of those who feel it good to be there, it embraces the choice spirits of the Church—the *multum in parvo*—a condensation of the spiritual character of the Church. And it may be that the prayer of this little band goes up with as much force and acceptance, as that uttered in the great congregation. In this view, the very thinness of the meeting brings it nearest to God and heaven. And, reader, let us never be discouraged from attendance by the expectation that the numbers will be few, for the fewer they are, the more choice and select will be the company.—*New England Puritan*.

## EMINENT PIETY.

BY REV. W. S. PLUMER, D. D.

Professors of religion may be divided into three classes. First, there are those of whom even charity does not hope that they have passed from death unto life. They are carnal, contentious, covetous or careless. They are manifestly just such men as they always were. No change of life appears to prove a change of heart; they are just like their worldly neighbors, except that they go to the Lord's table. They are spots in Christian feasts. They add no strength to the church. The church has their names, but the world has their hearts. Their number is large.

Secondly, there are those who sometimes seem quite changed. They appear to have humility, love and zeal, but their course is not uniform. They have great defects, and fall into some excesses. The best Christians stand in doubt of them, not because they love to indulge in suspicion, but because they cannot help it. They hope and fear, they distrust and confide, and are afraid all the time that they are doing wrong. This class of professors at one time seem quite penitent; and again, quite under the power of evil. There is not much very decidedly against them, but there is nothing very strongly in their favor. Their number is considerable. Some of them will be saved, perhaps more of them than is commonly supposed; but many of them will perish. God knows who are his, and can find a grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff; but he will never take a bushel of chaff for a grain of wheat. Those of them, who are saved, will suffer great loss. Their works are to a great extent wood, hay and stubble, and will be burned up.

The third class consists of those whose profession is attended by fervent love, deep humility, constancy, a well-tempered zeal, attachment to the whole law of God, and a renunciation of the world, to which they do not seem inclined to return. They have trials, days of darkness, doubts, which lead them to cry mightily to God, and perhaps at times keen anguish. But no charitable person, who knows, ever doubts where their hearts are. They never turn back—they never look back. They are entirely reliable. It is supposed that they maintain regular secret devotion, because they exhibit a uniform behaviour. Their brethren trust them, and are never disappointed. Even wicked men soon cease to lay snares for them, for they see that their minds are made up, and they "feel how awful goodness is." They lose little time in debating questions, which trouble others. Their rule is to get as far as possible from all sin. They seldom dally with temptation. If they fall, it is only to rise as Anteus in wrestling with Hercules, with new strength. There is a sweet savor of piety about them. Their manners are various, some being polished and bland, others being awkward and uncouth; some being free and affable, others quiet and retiring. But they uniformly show a tender

conscience and upright intentions, zeal for God and love for his people. They use the world as not abusing it. Their business is to live unto God, and to die unto God. Nor do they overact their part. They are zealous but not officious, prudent but not cowardly, decided but not obstinate. They greatly love the truth. It is their food. But they do not make a man an offender for a word. They are modest but not mean, cast down but not in despair. Their humility is one of the loveliest traits in their characters. They say but little to their own praise, because they do not think well of themselves. They put themselves among the least of saints. With pleasure they acknowledge the gifts and graces of their brethren, and feel reproved by the superior attainments of others. They never think themselves eminent Christians. They forget past attainments, and press forward to learn and to do more and better than they ever have. They hate the vain thoughts which trouble them, and are ashamed of their many failures. Indeed, humility, like a cloak of ample folds, is cast all over and around them. They grow; but they first cast their roots downwards, and then bear fruit upward. They not only commenced, but they continue to live by the doctrine of salvation by grace. They begin in the spirit, and they end in the spirit. Their fruit remaineth in them because they abide in Christ. He is their life and all their salvation. They glory in the cross of Christ. They glory in nothing else.—*[New York Observer]*.

„Too Late—too late!”—The Dying Universalist.

A LEAF FROM THE JOURNAL OF A HOME MISSIONARY.

I might also speak of another case quite different. I visited him lying on a sick bed, from time to time, but his heart was hard and unrelenting. With his deluded wife, he trusted in Universalist principles. Thus, apparently with perfect indifference, he continued several months upon his sick bed. But death was now drawing near. The physicians informed him that he could live but a very short time. As I was thinking upon his situation, one evening in my study, at a very late hour, I heard a rap at my door. I found a messenger from the dying man, desiring me to come immediately and see him. Although his family had endeavored to persuade him to wait till morning, yet he must see me without delay. I went immediately to the house of death; all was still and solemn as I entered the apartment where the dying man lay. As I approached the bed, his languid eye rested upon me. „Oh,” said he, calling me by name, „you see that I am going fast. I have sent for you that I may attend to the interests of my soul. What I do, must be done quickly. I have often heard them say that a dying bed was a poor place for repentance. I find it to be true. Oh, what shall I do?” I endeavored, as I had previously done, to direct his mind to „behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” After a moment's pause, „Oh,” said he, „it is too late; is it not? I have long slighted the offers of mercy. The time was, some five years ago, when I felt mercy was very near;” (alluding to a revival season when he was almost persuaded to be a Christian;) „but,” said he, „I grieved away the Spirit, and now he has gone from me!” Now in great agony of mind he endeavored to pray, repeating the Lord's prayer, and calling for mercy. He now turned to his weeping wife, and said, „Ah, we have tried to believe in Universal salvation; but it will not satisfy us in a dying hour.” He now expressed his sorrow for maintaining such principles, and exerting the influence he had over others. Again he cried, „Oh! what shall I do?—What shall I do?” An anxious sister replied, „Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” „Oh, how shall I believe? Ah, it is too late; I have delayed this matter too long; it is too late!”

His lips now closed in silence; he said no more to encourage the least hope that he died in peace. I retired from the scene, reflecting upon the folly of the sinner in putting off repentance to a dying hour. „It is too late,” said the dying man, „it is too late!” and he gave no evidence but that it was, indeed, too late. God had frequently called, but he had refused. Now, he was given up, in this hour of calamity, to feel it was too late. Thus closed the scene with one who had been living very near the means of grace, but for many years was scarcely seen in the house of God. He had lived in open sin and folly,

supporting by his influence and conduct the cause of irreligion. He now in the hour of death, recants and shows that he is afraid and unprepared to die.

## WEALTH—HOW TO BE REGARDED.

The Bible places wealth on the same footing with every other temporal good—to be regarded in the same manner, esteemed for the same reasons, sought in the same spirit, and used for the same end. Its very first mention of gold is in connection with the garden of Eden, and its last with the New Jerusalem—the heavenly city. It compares the tried and purified Christian to gold from the furnace; it informs us that God gave riches to Solomon as a mark of his favour; it describes the Son of Man, when appearing in his glory, as having on his head a golden crown. Its doctrine is, that *property*, like health, intellect, knowledge, influence, character, is a *talent*, entrusted by God, and to be used and accounted for to Him. It is like *food*, which properly eaten, contributes to health, but improperly and excessively, brings on surfeiting, fever, death. It is like *water*, which, kept without the ship, aids her to float on to her desired haven; but allowed to enter and fill that ship, is her ruin. Held with a right spirit, and used to right ends, it is like the *air* when moving in the healthful breeze, the minister of comfort, enjoyment, life; held with a wrong spirit, and used to wrong ends, it is like the same air when tainted with the pestilence, or swept by the tornado, the medium of injury and death.

It is not *gold*, but the *love*, that is, the excessive, supreme love of gold, which the Bible teaches is „the root of all evil”—which it declares is „*idolatry*.” The patriarch does not say, „If I have possessed gold,” but, „If I have made gold my hope, or said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence, this were an iniquity.” The Saviour does not exclaim, „How hardly shall they that have riches,” but as his own explanation is, „How hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!” Sought as a means to an end, like every other means, wealth is valuable for a thousand things; sought merely as an end, it becomes a curse. Properly used, it is a good; abused it is an evil. In the one case, it is „the load-stone to draw men nearer to God;” in the other, „the mill-stone, to sink them to perdition.”

## How to hear the Gospel.

Rowland Hill paid a visit to an old friend, a few years before his death, who said to him, „Mr. Hill, it is just sixty-five years since I first heard you preach, and I remember your text and a part of your sermon. You told us that some people were very squeamish about the delivery of different ministers who preached the same gospel. You said, suppose you were attending to hear a will read, where you expected a legacy to be left you, would you employ the time when it was reading, in criticising the manner in which the lawyer read it? No, you would not; you would be giving all ear to hear if anything was left to you, and how much it was. That is the way I would advise you to hear the gospel.” This was excellent advice, well worth remembering sixty-five years! Multitudes, because they have not learned the lesson taught by Rowland Hill, lose much of the benefit and enjoyment they might derive from hearing the gospel preached.—*Presbyterian of the West*.

To consider religion always on the comfortable side; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end, before we have made use of the means; to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness, before they have been employed to fight the battle; to be content with a false peace, and to use no efforts to obtain the graces, to which true consolation is annexed; this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as crystal, smooth as glass, the air serene; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy; but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur; the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light inflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of most men's assurance of salvation.—*Saurin*.

Henry IV. of France one day reached Amiens, after a long journey. A local orator was deputed to harangue him, and commenced with a very long string of epithets: „Very great sovereign, very good, very magnanimous”—and also, „interrupted the sovereign, „very tired.”